

## Frequently Asked Questions

**1. In what grade levels must student enroll in a physical education program?**

Enrollment in physical education is required in grades 1-12.

**2. What content areas must be taught in elementary physical education?**

Movement experiences and body mechanics; fitness activities; rhythmic activities; stunts and tumbling; simple games and relays; sports skills and activities; and water safety

**3. What content areas must be taught in junior high through high school physical education?**

Physical fitness activities that increase cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and flexibility; sports and games; tumbling and gymnastics; rhythms and dance; water safety; leisure and lifetime activities.

**4. What content areas must be taught at the high school level?**

Physical education shall include the physical fitness activities that increase cardiovascular endurance, muscular strength and flexibility; sports and games; tumbling and gymnastics; rhythms and dance; water safety; leisure and lifetime activities.

**5. Must all required content areas be taught every year?**

No. The requirements must be taught before completing each grade span (elementary, junior high, or high school).

**6. What is the mandated number of minutes per week for physical education**

The amount of physical education is not specified at the elementary and middle school levels. The Center for Disease Control and Prevention recommends daily physical activity for all children (<http://www.cdc.gov>). (<http://www.cdc.gov/ncckphp/dnpa/physical/everyone.htm>)

The Iowa Department of Education Team Nutrition Action Plan at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/499/446/>, Iowa Association of School Boards (IASB) at <http://www.ia-sb.org/WorkArea/showcontent.aspx?id=1586>, and Iowa Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation and Dance (IAHPERD) at <http://www.iowaahperd.org> recommended time allotment for physical education and recess.

The Iowa School Rules state that one unit of physical education must be taught at the high school level. In grades 9-12, a unit is a course or equivalent related components or partial units taught throughout the academic year.

A unit is a course which meets one of the following criteria: It is taught for at least 200 minutes per week for 36 weeks; it is taught for the equivalent of 120 hours of instruction; or it is an equated requirement as a part of an innovative program filed in subrule 12.1(6). A fractional unit may be calculated in a manner consistent with this standard. Multiple section courses taught at the same time in a single classroom situation by one teacher do not meet this definition for the assignment of a unit of credit with the exception that the third and fourth years of a foreign language may be taught at the same time by one teacher in a single classroom situation, each yielding a unit of credit.

**7. Are schools required to conduct physical fitness testing?**

No. That is a local choice.

**8. What types of exemptions are allowed under the school rules of Iowa for Physical Education?**

- *Religious Exemption* -- Physical education and health exemption. A pupil shall not be required to enroll in either physical education or health courses if the pupil's parent or guardian files a written statement with the school principal that the course conflicts with the pupil's religious beliefs.
- *Athletic and Academic Exemptions* -- A 12<sup>th</sup> grade student may be excused from the physical education requirement by the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled under one of the following circumstances:
  - (1) The student is enrolled in a cooperative, work study, or other educational program authorized by the school which requires the student's absence from the school's premises during the school day.
  - (2) The student is enrolled in an academic course not otherwise available.
  - (3) An organized or supervised athletic program which requires at least as much participation time per week as one-eighth unit of physical education.

Students in grades 9-11 may be excused from the physical education requirement to enroll in academic courses not otherwise available to the student if the board of directors of the school district in which the school is located, or the authorities in charge of the school if the school is a nonpublic school, determine that the students from the school may be permitted to be excused from the physical education requirement.

A student may be excused by the principal of the school in which the student is enrolled, in consultation with the student's counselor, for up to one semester, trimester, or the equivalent of a semester or a trimester, per year if the parent or guardian of the student requests in writing that the student be excused from the physical education requirement. The student seeking to be excused from the physical education requirement must, at some time period

during which the excuse is sought, be a participant in an organized athletic program which requires at least as much time of participation per week as one-eighth unit of physical education.

The student's parent or guardian must request the excuse in writing. The principal shall inform the superintendent that the student is excused.

**9. Can a school district question the student's utilization of a religious exemption?**

No. Religious beliefs are a personal choice and not to be questioned.

**10. Can a school district question the student's utilization of a medical exemption if signed by a physician?**

No, not if the medical exemption is signed by a physician.

**11. Must school districts allow for athletic exemptions?**

No. Exemptions from physical education for participation in athletics must be determined by the local school board.

**12. May high school students (9-12) opt out of physical education for both semesters with an athletic exemption?**

Yes. If the local board of directors allows this exemption.

**13. May a senior opt out of physical education for both semesters with an academic exemption?**

Yes. If the student desires to enroll in an academic course or a cooperative, work study, or other educational program authorized by the school which requires the student's absence from the school's premises during the school day that conflict with PE. In conflict means the course cannot be taken at any other time during the day.

**14. May a student in grades 9-11 opt out of physical education for both semesters with an academic exemption?**

No. Academic exemptions are available for up to one semester, trimester, or the equivalent of a semester or trimester each year.

**15. If a student utilizes an athletic exemption and consequently drops the course, or quits participation in the athletic season, or in the case of spring athletics, exempts out in January and does not go out for the spring activity in March, what are the consequences for the student?**

The student must enroll in a physical education course.

## **16. Are all physical education classes required to be coeducational?**

Yes. The general rule of federal law is laid out in Title IX of the Education amendments of 1972. It states that a recipient of federal funds shall not provide any course or otherwise carry out any of its educational program or activity separately on the basis of sex or require or refuse participation therein by any of its students on such basis including health, physical education, industrial arts, business, vocational, technical, home economics, music, and adult education classes. In addition Chapter 12 of the Iowa Administrative Code, which constitute the accreditation standards for *Iowa schools* states that school districts shall take affirmative steps to integrate students in courses on the basis of sex.

However, Title IX was recently modified to allow for experimentation with gender-segregated classes under very specific conditions:

- There must be an important educational objective such as to raise student achievement and/or increase student participation in the program or course.
- The problem which motivates the change must be clearly identified.
- The course is implemented in an even-handed manner for both males and females.
- Student enrollment in the single-gender course or program is strictly voluntary.
- The school provides all other students including students of the excluded sex a substantially equal coeducational class or activity. Under some circumstances the school may be required to provide a substantially equal single sex class or activity for the other gender.
- The school conducts periodic evaluations to ensure the single sex class is based upon genuine data-based justifications, and does not rely on overly broad generalizations about the talents, capacities, or preferences of either sex, and is genuinely related to an important educational objective. The evaluations must be conducted every two years.
- The evaluations show that the single sex program is leading to higher achievement and/or participation in the course or program. If not, the practice must be discontinued.

In addition, a school or school district must apply for a waiver from Chapter 12 of the Iowa Administrative Code each year the gender segregated program is in place showing that the above conditions have been met. The waiver application is available at <http://www.iowa.gov/educate/content/view/483/530> or by contacting Del Hoover, Deputy Division Administrator at 515-281-8402.

## **17. Is ability grouping of physical education students allowed?**

Yes. Title IX allows grouping of students in physical education classes and activities by ability as assessed by objective standards of individual performance developed and applied without regard to sex.

## **18. Is separation by gender allowed during specific contact activities?**

Yes. Title IX allows separation of students by sex within physical education classes or activities during participation in wrestling, boxing, rugby, ice hockey, football, basketball, and other sports, the purpose or major activity involves bodily contact. However, separation may only occur during the actual contact play; not during warm-up, lecture, or non-contact drill work.

**19. Is student choice of physical education activities appropriate under Title IX?**

Yes. However, if choice leads to an inequity in gender representation, then the district must review its policies, practices, and curriculum options to ensure they are not contributing to the gender imbalance and make efforts to recruit the under-represented gender.

**Points of Contact**

***Time requirements and related administrative issues***

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***Title IX***

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